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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 KABUL 003625

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/09/2019
TAGS: PGOV PREL AF
SUBJECT: CABINET RUMORS - TEN DAYS BEFORE INAUGURATION

REF: A. KABUL 2917
B. KABUL 3103

Classified By: D/AMB Francis Ricciardone; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) Summary: Afghan political circles are abuzz with cabinet rumors, as fake cabinet lists begin circulating again (Ref. A), and clans and individuals lobby Karzai and his team for plum cabinet positions. The "money" ministries offering the most opportunities for graft are attracting the most bidders. Many interlocutors tell us that regional and ethnic players are providing Karzai "lists." Some contacts contend that the ongoing U.S. strategy debate and the uncertainty of our support for Afghanistan has helped pressure Karzai to create a better list of competent, clean cabinet members, but others claim our delay lends momentum to those regional players who seek to depict the United States as a weak ally who will again abandon Afghanistan. Afghanistan's current cabinet selection process resembles its informal backdoor pre-election deals, where formal institutions meant to provide oversight are sidetracked (Ref B). End Summary

The Power and Money Ministries

12. (S) The political chatter in Kabul has shifted to Karzai's future cabinet, while key Karzai-supporters and Abdullah-supporter Rabbani scramble for ministries that either offer the most power and/or money. There is some consensus that the best money ministries, and therefore the best potential for kickbacks, include Finance, Transportation, IDLG, Mines, and Urban Development. The positions offering the most political power in the eyes of Afghan politics-watchers are Defense, Interior, NDS, National Security Advisor, Foreign Affairs, and the head of the Director of the President's Administrative Affairs. According to Finance Minister Zakhwal, this last position is likely to increase in importance. As Afghan politicians note that the United States and other donors want to channel more support directly to the provinces, the perception is that more money will correspondingly move to provincial positions. Therefore, many think Ismael Khan is "following the money" and lobbying to recoup his old job as Herat Governor, or to be appointed governor of another Eastern province.

13. (S) Karzai Advisor Sebghatullah Sanjar, a reliable Embassy source, told us that the Palace is still considering the possibility of forming "supra-ministries" by merging similar ministries, like Economics with Commerce, the Tribal and Border Affairs Ministry with the Ministry of Interior, and the Refugees Ministry with the Foreign Affairs Ministry. He said the less-important ministries would become departments within the larger ministries. Supra-ministerial positions would be created to provide oversight to clusters of ministries, with the following four themes: 1) security, 2) social and economic development, 3) religious affairs, and, 4) political affairs. (Comment: This construct would also enable the new Karzai administration to create additional cabinet-level positions, which could be used to help meet the expectations of a large number of supporters who expect a return on their investment in Karzai. At the same time, senior figures in a number of existing ministries question whether such supra-ministries could work given egos and i.e. usual ways of doing business within GIRoA. End Comment.)

Cabinet Rumors

14. (S) The following individuals are on the short lists for ministerial positions, according to various MPs, political party leaders, and Presidential Palace Advisors:

--Foreign Affairs - MP Hamid Gailani (a pro-American but weak politician), Anwari Ahadi (many say he is too much of a

Pashtun nationalist), and current NSA Zalmai Rassoul (who enjoys mujahadeen support and is the most likely candidate right now). Hedayat Amin Arsala has also been mentioned, but we believe this is unlikely.

--Interior - Almost all indicate that Atmar is out and note that Marshall Fahim has been promised this Ministry for one of his Panjshiri supporters. One of the published lists features a Pashtun MP with a bad human rights record: Sayed Mohammad Gullab Zoi. Most think this is unlikely. General Helal and Ahmad Wali Massoud have also been mentioned, although their chances appear slim. Massoum Stanikzai was the Minister of communications in the transitional government, and was the Vice Chairman of the Reintegration and Demobilization Commission. Most agree that he is a favorite of the international community. He has a mastas were promised this Ministry, but since they did not come through for Karzai in terms of votes, as many Hazara votes went to Bashardost, they may no longer be rewarded this "cash cow."

--Agriculture - Asif Rahimi appears to be one of the three most likely ministers to keep his position.

--Health - Upper House Speaker Mojadedi's son, Najibullah Mojadedi. However, many in the international community are pushing for the well-regarded and competent Sayed Fatimie to stay. He is also a Mojadedi associate.

--Energy and Water - Junbesh MP Shakar Kargar. His name has been the only one mentioned for this position for some time. Most think he was a competent minister when he had this job before, and is relatively clean.

--Education - Most say this position has been promised to Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan, and Chairman Arghandewal will pick a supporter for the job.

--Higher Education - Most indicate this ministry has been promised to Dostum's side of Junbesh. Most think Dostum will ask MP Faizullah Zaki to represent him in a ministry job. Most think he is not qualified for this position. The current Foreign Affairs Minister Spanta is also a possibility.

--Finance - Most think Mohammad Zakhwal will stay on, but some say this ministry was promised to the Hazaras.

--Women's Affairs - MP Shukria Barakzai. She is an outspoken MP and was a faithful Karzai-supporter during the elections, although during her frequent television and radio appearances, she claimed to be neutral. She has a strong voice, and most think she would raise the visibility of this ministry.

--Labor and Social Affairs - Fatima Gailani, the former head of the Red Crescent. She is married to former Finance Minister and presidential candidate Anwari Ahadi. She is Hamid Gailani's sister and influential Pir Gailani's daughter.

--Reconciliation Czar - 2nd Vice President Khalili. This seems unusual, as warlord Khalili is a Hazara and would be tasked to make peace with primarily Pashtuns, his former enemies. However, he maintains significant ties to Saudi Arabia, which might be the logic behind this possibility.

--Parliamentary Affairs - MP Abdul Rassoul Sayyaf. This would make sense, as he is an influential member of Parliament, and was disappointed when he lost the Lower House Speaker job to Yunus Qanooni, who received just a few more votes than Sayyaf. However, most think Sayyaf was behind the controversial Shia Family Law and the Amnesty Bill for warlords like himself that quietly passed two years ago, so overall, his presence would not be positive. Some suggest former Minister Mohammad Anwar Jekdalek might stay on, as he remains a close Karzai confidant.

--Other Rumors: Rabbani initially was pushing for ministries handling larger quantities of money, such as Transport and

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--Defense - Few say Wardak will stay on, although it helps that he remains well-liked by Coalition partners. Others suggest Gul Agha Sherzai is a possibility, although he is known for his corruption and possible links to narcotrafficking. Massoum Stanikzai is another possibility.

--Rural Development - Mohammad Hanif Atmar, the current Interior Minister. He occupied this position before, and although his background is relevant some doubt he would enjoy the relative downgrade. His name has come up consistently

for this job.

--NDS - Most say Amrullah Salah will likely stay on, but Abdul Rasoul Sayyaf and elements of Hezb-e-Islami are pushing hard for the corrupt and ineffective current acting Minister of Border and Tribal Affairs Assadullah Khalid. Khalid helped Karzai significantly during his Presidential campaign, some allege using most of his Ministry's budget to do so.

--Commerce - Wahidullah Shahrani appears to be one of the three most likely ministers to keep his position.

--Justice - Sayyaf is also pushing hard for Khalid in this Ministry. Hazara warlord Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq also wants to send one of his supporters to this Ministry (currently held by a Hazara).

--Transportation - Hamidullah Farrooqi is also one of the three most likely ministers to keep his position. Some say the Hazaras were promised this Ministry, but since they did not come through for Karzai in terms of votes, as many Hazara votes went to Bashardost, they may no longer be rewarded this "cash cow."

--Agriculture - Asif Rahimi appears to be one of the three most likely ministers to keep his position.

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Public Works, but now will "settle for anything at the ministerial level for his son," according to Sanjar.

Where to put the Warlords?

15. (S) Although Karzai is under significant pressure from the UN, United States, and other allies to bring fresh faces to the ministries and avoid positioning warlords and others known for corruption in the cabinet, he made promises to many such politicians during his election. Sanjar told us that Karzai is "afraid" of Marshall Fahim, especially if he is given one of the security ministries-not for himself, but for one of his followers. The warlord most likely to receive a significant position (beyond the already-established two Vice Presidents) is Ismael Khan. Minister Atmar, Karzai Advisors, and even Rabbani's son Salahuddin Rabbani have told us that "the pressure is too great" for Karzai to avoid giving Khan a key position, likely back in his home province of Herat. Marshall Fahim, Professor Rabbani, MP Sayyaf, and Dostum are pushing for key ministerial positions for their cronies. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah has confirmed to us that Rabbani will likely drop out of his political sphere in order to secure a ministry for his son Salahuddin.

16. (S) At this point the selection process resembles the informal backdoor pre-election deals, where formal institutions meant to provide oversight -- like the Senior Appointments Board -- are sidetracked in favor of political deals made to key campaign supporters. Karzai's traditional affinity for selecting associates for their loyalty and tribal connections makes selecting ministers on only merit-based calculations "very difficult," according to one senior Karzai advisor. However, as a senior Karzai aide told us, "Karzai does not need help breaking promises," as he has done so quite frequently in the past. MP Fazal Aimaq (Aimaq, Kunduz) told us Karzai has promised at least three hundred people a senior position. MP Helaludin Helal (Tajik, Baghlan) said Karzai often relies on the numerous (some say as many as 40) Presidential Senior Advisor positions to appease those who were falsely promised positions, as they still receive a face-saving high rank and a ministry-level salary. Junbesh leadership has told us Dostum will again be appointed to another ceremonial position and will again travel out of the country.

Regional Favorites

17. (S) Palace insiders have told us that most embassies, including Iran, are pressuring Karzai to include their favorites. Palace Chief of Staff Omar Daudzai and Director of the President's Administrative Affairs Sadeq Mudaber reportedly were Iran's picks, but most say Mudaber is out, and Daudzai may be assigned another ambassadorial post. There is almost unanimous support to remove Daudzai from his current job--hardly a politician fails to comment about his corruption and poor advice to the President. Daudzai is also reputedly the most anti-Western of all Palace advisors. Most observers claim Pakistan's picks correlate with Sayyaf's, and include corrupt Border and Tribal Affairs Minister Assadullah Khalid, Haji and Islamic Affairs Sediq Chakari, and Ulema Council Chairman Shinwari. Germany reportedly continues to support German-educated Foreign Affairs Minister Rangin Spanta, while many other embassies are advocating for good local officials in the provinces where they operate PRTs.

18. (S) Many of our interlocutors tell us that the reports of the policy debate in the U.S. over troop levels has helped pressure Karzai to offer a better list of competent, clean cabinet members; however, others worry that discussions in Washington lend momentum to those regional players who assert that the United States is a weak ally and will again abandon Afghanistan.

Another Fake List

19. Another likely fake cabinet list started circulating on November 4 via Internet, which eventually was picked up by the same local publication as the previous lists (ref A, elections daily update 9/15). These lists are either categorized as lies meant to discredit Karzai, or a way for the Palace to float some names to gauge the reaction. This list is a depressing one for the international community, as it places several corrupt warlords in key positions. However, at least 15 of the names on the list match with the rumors we have been hearing, so part of the list appears credible.

of Defense.)

--Interior - Sayed Mohammad Gulabzoi - (This Pashtun MP has a bad human rights record and was the Minister of Interior during the Karmal years of the Communist regime. He used to belong to the National Front.)

--Minister of Foreign Affairs - The former Finance Minister Anwari Ahadi (Possible.)

--Energy and Water - Shakar Kargar (Very likely. He is experienced and enjoyed a decent reputation as competent and relatively clean when he was previously Minister of Energy and Water.)

--Education - Partaw Naderi (Not likely - he is a political analysts who appears frequently on television. Perhaps his name on this list was meant to show he had a strong Karzai bias.)

--Culture and Information - Farooq Wardak (This is possible, and would be positive. He is known to be a competent minister, but lost some credibility due to his heavy campaigning and misuse of public office during Karzai's campaign.)

--Higher Education - Habbibullah Rafi (Unlikely. He is a political analyst and activist. He frequently appears on television.)

--Rural Rehabilitation and Development - Mohammad Atmar (Probable, and a good choice.)

--Justice - Nasrullah Istanakzai (Possible. He is a Law Professor at Kabul University. He generally has a good reputation as an academic.)

--Agriculture - Aei Rahimi will stay on (Likely, and positive.)

--Women's Affairs - Shukria Barakzai (Likely, and positive.)

--Work and Social Affairs - Fatima Gailani (Likely, and not bad.)

--Commerce - Wahidullah Shahrani (Likely, and positive.)

--Counter Narcotics - Gul Agha Sherzai (A bad possibility - he is known for his corruption and association with drug trafficking.)

--Finance - Mohammad Omer Zakhiwal (Likely, positive.)

--Communication - Sayed Jamal Arsala

--Transport - Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq (It is possible, as Mohaqeq is no doubt pushing for this most-coveted cash rich ministry. However, this appointment would be very negative, as he is incompetent, corrupt, and a former warlord.)

--Economy - MP Aziz Ahmad Nadim (Possible. He is the head of the Economic Committee in the Lower House. He is a businessman with a good reputation.)

--Public Health - Najibullah Mojaddedi (Upper House Speaker Mojaddedi's son - this is likely. It is unknown how he would perform, but regardless it would be hard to improve on the highly competent current Minister and Mojaddedi-linked Sayed Amin Fatimie.)

--Border and Tribal Affairs - MP Mullah Tara Khel Kuchi (Possible. He is known for being corrupt and contributed to the stuffing of ballots in his home in Kabul. He is pushing for a payback from Karzai.)

--Haj - Mohammad Sediq Chakari (Possible but negative. He is the current acting Minister of the Haj. He is known for being corrupt. The Parliament failed to approve his appointment, so he is still the acting minister.)

--Urban Development - Engineer Ebrahim Farahi

--Public Works - MP Sayed Hashim Fawlad (Possible. He sits on the National Economy Committee of the Lower House, and is a Pashtun from Nangarhar Province. He graduated from the Kabul University's Journalism School. His a Pashtun nationalist and a member of the Afghan Milat party.)

--Mines and Industry - Sayed Mansoor Naderi (This MP is a Tajik from Baghlan, and has very limited education. He

self-taught himself to read and write.)

--Refugees - Nadir Khan Katawazi (Possible. She is a member of Parliament from Paktika. She is a member of Shukria Barakzai's Third Line political movement. During the Peace Jirga, she worked very closely with Farooq Wardak. She serves on the Lower House's WOmen's Affairs Committee.)

--Administrative Affairs - General Hessamuddin Hessam. (Possible. He is one of Marshall Fahim's supporters. He is from Panjshir. He was a former commander and has a law degree.)

--Parliamentary Affairs - Abdul Satar Sayyaf (Possible, quite negative. This conservative former warlord is known for having a hand in the controversial Shia Family Law.)

--IDLG - Ismael Khan (Possible, but very negative. Khan is known for his corruption and warlord status.)

--National Bank - Ahmad Shekib Bakhshi.

--NDS - Amrullah Saleh (Likely, positive.)

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